

## Autumn Term 2019

### *This term in school...*

*Welcome to my Headteacher's Letter. Sent home termly it will let you know what's happening in school: at a leadership level, for the whole school and in the classroom.*

Now in my seventh year as Headteacher of Amherst it is a chance to reflect on the achievements of last year and also focus on the development priorities for this year.

Firstly, welcome to all new children and families in Year 3 and other year groups. I hope your first months at Amherst have been a positive experience. The Buddy system in Year 3 continues to be a success and helped aid transition into Year 3, especially on the first morning. We also try to ensure that the Buddy system continues beyond just the first day. Each Year 3 and Year 6 class are paired to facilitate the classes working together when appropriate.

Each year part of the school's performance is judged by the Year 6 SATs results. The children sit these tests in May of Year 6. Last year's Year 6 pupils have performed significantly above the national average in all areas. Writing continues to be assessed by teachers in each individual school rather than a written exam. For a child to be at the Expected Standard they needed to score 100 + with the maximum score being 120. For a child to be assessed as achieving a High Score they needed to score 110+. Yet again, these are an excellent set of results. We are well above the national average in all areas. Well done and thank you to all the children and teaching team for their hard work and commitment to high standards.

Subject		Amherst	National
Reading, Writing & Maths Combined	Expected Standard	88%	65%
	Higher standard	30%	11%
Reading	Expected Standard+	92%	73%
	High score (110+)	51%	27%
Writing	Expected Standard+	94%	78%
	Greater Depth	36%	20%
Grammar Punctuation and Spelling	Expected Standard+	92%	78%
	High score (110+)	51%	34%
Maths	Expected Standard+	94%	79%
	High score (110+)	56%	27%

The progress measure is an indicator to judge progress from end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6.

Reading Progress Measure 1.4  
Above Average

Writing Progress Measure 0.7  
Average

Mathematics Progress Measure 2.1  
Above Average

Overall, these are a fantastic set of results, both progress and attainment. I am most proud of our progress measures. We are ranked Above Average (top 20%) in Reading and Maths. We are ranked Average for Writing. Schools are always aspiring to achieve high progress measures alongside high attainment.

### **Kent Test**

Eighty-six Year 6 children sat the Kent Test (11+) on 12<sup>th</sup> September and sixty-one (63%) passed the test. 63% is an incredibly high pass rate and congratulations must be awarded to the children, teachers and parents. It is a team

effort. As in previous years, I was a member of the Headteachers' Kent Test Appeal Panel. I find this is such a valuable experience as it gives me insight to the standards needed for an appeal to be successful. It also helps maintain good relationships with the secondary school headteachers.

At the beginning of every year, schools write a School Improvement Plan. I would like to share with you the three key priorities on our Plan for this year:

- Review foundation subject's curriculum to ensure it provides a clear progression of skills and high quality learning experiences for all pupils.
- Ensure Online Safety learning objectives are effectively delivered across the Computing, PSHE and SRE curriculum.
- Ensure reading is taught effectively in each year group

I recently visited Sunhill Junior School in Hampshire. It was an opportunity to share good practice with another junior school and also the chance to visit my old school! Another link with Sunhill was that my father taught there during the mid-1980s and through the 1990s. The Headteacher was in her second year of headship and faced many challenges as the school is currently graded Inadequate by Ofsted. What I found inspiring was her enthusiasm and determination to improve the school, enabling current and future pupils to experience a higher quality of education. She was yet to connect fully with the town (New Alresford) but her connection with her children and parents was already so strong. Her sense of duty and willingness to serve stood out. Driving home, having had a brief lunch with my parents, I tried to understand the purpose of my visit. Was it just a fun day out and a chance to nose around my old school? By visiting my old school, I felt a deep sense of what it is like to progress as a child to an eventual career. I couldn't help but picture my ten-year-old self in classrooms (which had changed very little). I wanted to be able to talk to my younger self and give advice and guidance. There would be many messages I would want to give such as:

- Kindness matters – give it and receive it
- Don't worry so much what people think of you
- Work harder and try harder
- Believe in yourself
- Savour and enjoy junior school life
- Concentrate harder when batting in cricket – don't throw your wicket away
- Keep playing the trumpet and begin to practice unprompted – it will lead to good things

I could list more but I am not sure my ten-year-old self would listen!

As a teacher, one of my favourite and most rewarding activities would be to read to my class at the end of the day. In the summer I would take them outside and read under a tree. We would serialise a range of books over the year. Having spoken to ex pupils, they often mention those as some of their happiest times. I know they made good academic progress in a range of subjects but it is interesting to note what they regarded as memorable school experiences. One of my favourite poetry books to share was 'Heard it in the Playground' by Allan Ahlberg. A poem that always stood out and provoked much discussion and depth of feeling was 'The Boy Without a Name'. It provided a powerful message, enabling children to understand the importance of their actions and impact on their classmates. I have added a copy of the poem at the end of this letter. Maybe take the time to read it with your child and explore the discussion that I am sure it will create.

I continue to try to teach a different class each Friday morning. It enables me to get to know the children better (at least learn their names!) and also get a feel for how their class is progressing. The children get to know me as a teacher and a person, which helps develop positive relationships. It also ensures that any whole school strategies and initiatives are firmly rooted in improving teaching and learning.

If you ever feel the need to come and speak to me, please don't hesitate to contact the office. If I am available, I am always happy to chat immediately and if not, make an appointment. If you want a good idea for a child's Christmas present I would recommend Rescues by David Long (author of Survivors and Heroes). A word of warning though, these stories will feature heavily in my assemblies in the new year!

Finally, thank you for all who attended the Amherst's Grand Design Project launch and the interest expressed. I feel confident our ambitious vision will be achieved. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Christmas Bazaar and Carol Service.

Best Wishes

Andrew Reid

## **The Boy Without a Name**

I remember him clearly  
And it was thirty years ago or more:  
A boy without a name.

A friendless, silent boy,  
His face blotched red and flaking raw,  
His expression, infinitely sad.

Some kind of eczema  
It was, I now suppose,  
The rusty iron mask he wore.

But in those days we confidently swore  
It was from playing near dustbins  
And handling broken eggshells.

His hands, of course, and knees  
Were similarly scabbed and cracked and dry.  
The rest of him we never saw.

They said it wasn't catching; still, we knew  
And strained away from him along the corridor,  
Sharing a ruler only under protest.

I remember the others: Brian Evans,  
Trevor Darby, Dorothy Cutler.  
And the teachers: Mrs Palmer, Mr Waugh

I remember Albert, who collect buttons,  
And Amos, frothing his milk up with a straw.  
But his name, no, for it was never used.

I need a time-machine.  
I must get back to nineteen fifty-four  
And play with him, or talk, at least.

For now I often wake to see  
His ordinary, haunting face, his flaw.  
I hope his mother loved him.

Oh, children, don't be crueler than you need.